

Editorial writes off rural Missourians

Post Dispatch Letters to the Editor: Monday, November 25, 2002

Democrats soul-searching after the November election should look no farther than this newspaper's Nov. 21 editorial, "Let it flood," to understand why growing numbers of non-urban American voters are taking their votes elsewhere.

Faced with a choice between protecting 6,000 rural people of modest means in Southeast Missouri from flooding or going ahead with an environmental experiment, the *Post-Dispatch* sided against the people.

And what words of comfort did this newspaper give to the Pinhook and East Prairie residents forced to cart their children to school during flood season in flat-bed trailers hitched to tractors? You said, "Let it flood."

Safe behind its 500-year flood-wall, the *Post-Dispatch* moralizes about the evils of flood protection elsewhere without fear of getting its own newsprint wet. Not once in all your editorials about how others should bear the burden of returning the river to its supposed "natural flow" has this paper volunteered the once-natural flood plain now inhabited by downtown St. Louis. Apparently, only the "have-nots" should surrender their land and livelihoods to the latest environmental agenda item. Shame on you.

If it were only big-city, liberal Democratic newspapers trumpeting this agenda, non-urban voters might still be voting Democratic. But more than ever, what is seen on this and similar editorial pages is no different from what voters hear from national Democratic leaders. And the consequences can clearly be seen at the voting booth.

Please don't misunderstand me. I believe we can protect the environment while also protecting people and their land and livelihoods - people like Jim Robinson and his neighbors in Pinhook and East Prairie. Caring about people and environment doesn't have to be a zero-sum game.

But if push came to shove and I had to choose, I would come down on the side of the Jim Robinsons of Missouri every time. In politics today, that seems to be the road less traveled. And it is making all the difference in the world.

Sen. Christopher S. Bond

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